582 It is not unusual for an old man to marry a very young girl; indeed, it is common. Although a young man rarely marries a very old woman, a woman may marry a man much younger than she is as a result of the customs involved with inheritance.

Kinship in the direct line is an obstacle, in infinitum. Certain collateral relatives may not marry each other: uncle and niece, aunt and nephew. Marriage is also an obstacle in some cases: a man may not be the husband of two sisters simultaneously, although he may marry them successively; the same restriction applies to a mother and daughter and an aunt and niece.

587

A man may not marry the wife of his son, nephew, or younger brother.

No marriage can take place between free persons in good standing and people of caste or, still less, slaves.

584 Impediments. From the opening of negotiations to the moment when the woman is handed over, there is a very long interval [196] of time during which impediments may arise.

First marriages, with which we are here concerned, are community affairs. A young man who would undertake the matter on his own would be most imprudent for he is no more his own master than is the girl, and their wishes are not of the least importance; this is an occasion for the fa to bring off a profitable deal. The fa, therefore, opposes any match which does not suit his plans and, indeed, forces the young man to share his views. If the latter rebels, the refusal of the fa to recognize the marriage will deprive the wife and children of any claim to legitimacy in the eyes of the community which he heads. There is no legal recourse possible against such a decision, because each community is answerable only to itself for matters concerning it.

[562] The girl is even more completely under the control of the community than the young man. Destined to be given in usufruct, she is entirely at the mercy of those holding this right over her. If she rebels, she runs the risk of being brutally brought to task through every means of coercion and, if in such circumstances she has children, they can be taken from her by the community, to which they will then belong. Custom gives her no rights over them whatsoever.

[851]

584 Thus, the fa of the two communities manage the entire transaction. Does this mean that the young people have no way of influencing the decision of the "elders"? No, because here, as elsewhere, all sorts of intrigue affect the decision of the fa. He must take account of the views of those around him; he is aware of their feelings, and he is just as likely to subordinate his interests to affection as to hatred. He is perfectly well aware, as is his entourage, that although he can impose his will, even though arbitrary, while he lives, all he has achieved may collapse at his death if his work was ill supported.

In short, the rigidity of the principles which put the "young" at the mercy of the "elders" is, in fact, more often [182] than not relaxed in favor of the young people's desires. The solidarity between members of the community makes them give heed to the opinions of others; it is this need to minimize differences of opinion that makes any family affair drag on endlessly. Discussions, agreements, and reciprocal gifts characterize the [197] bargaining and compromise which are so great a part of the transactions. From this it is apparent what an essential role is played by the numerous intermediaries who are called in to prevent clashes and to mitigate friction, but too often turn to exploiting community difficulties.

In any event, these discussions serve to publicize these transactions just as we achieve the same end through legal means.

The request and agreements. The request is made by an [564] intermediary. In Kaarta this is a man of caste, usually a dyeli (griot), accompanied by a free man. Elsewhere, notably at Ségou, he is sometimes a middle-aged man, known for his experience in such matters, who in this role is called furu-bolo-ma-tigi, "marriage director."

The furu-bolo-ma-tigi goes to the house of the fa of the girl, states his mission, and if he is favorably received, offers him some kola nuts which he has brought with him. He returns home with a promise that the request will be considered.

The fa does in fact consult his entourage and especially his ancestors and gods. The furu-bolo-ma-tigi returns with offerings to be used in questioning the ancestors and gods; if the reply

584 is unfavorable, that is by no means the end of the matter, for both ancestors and gods usually allow themselves to be persuaded, for a price. When the reply is, or becomes, favorable, the furu-bolo-ma-tigi gives customary presents to the fa and to the girl's family. Henceforth, the two communities, that of the young man and that of the girl, are united by a bond that can be broken only for the gravest reasons, and even then a rupture will usually give rise to serious disagreements.

583 It is at this point that the parties agree, not without much argument and bargaining, on the amount, type, and mode of payment of the bride price and the date on which the girl will be handed over.

Between the time of the agreement and the release of the woman, there is a period which is often very long and in some cases several years. This interval is used by the girl's mother to prepare the things she will give her daughter (clothing, household utensils, etc.). [198] The fiancé, meanwhile, needs the time to accumulate what he has promised to pay when the girl is given to him.

584 602 From this moment on, the relations between the two communities are very strictly governed. Native etiquette forbids the fiancée henceforth to meet or to take meals with her future brother-in-law unless a third party is present. The same applies to the young man and his future mother-in-law. The fiancé must constantly show that he takes an interest in anything that concerns his future affinal family. He must attend funerals and festivals or at least send a material contribution consistent with his wealth and social standing. When field work is in progress, it is customary for the fiancé's fula-ni to appear in a body and ceremoniously share the work. This demonstration of solidarity is mostly more noisy than helpful; the work is wholly simulated, but the proceedings always end in dancing and copious drinking.

583 184 Bride price (1) and gifts. The woman is not turned over

1. In certain regions (Bougouni, Sikasso, Koutiala, San) there is no regularly constituted bride price; the bridegroom's

583 occasion of funerals or religious ceremonies, he brings offerings
431 (fowl, kola nuts, millet, salt, etc.). The ceremony at which his contribution is indispensable is the da woro (1). On this

1. See p. 264 below.

occasion the furu-bolo-ma-tigi is entrusted with important gifts for the girl (clothing and jewelry) as well as for the relatives assembled (food of all kinds).

583 Just as the amount and nature of the furu-fen' vary, the manner of payment and the time set for the payment of the bride price are likewise left to the discretion of the parties. There may be a single payment or there may be installments, either before or partly before and partly after the bride is handed over. From the material point of view, the persons of the bride and groom are actually of no importance. The fa who gives the bride price wants a girl from the family with which he wishes an alliance, and all that matters is that the girl be marriageable at the date agreed upon, provided that she is handed over in accordance with the agreement. In the same connection, the person giving the bride price is not required to have the whole amount needed at the time of [200] the agreement; it is sufficient that he be in a position to pay when the amount falls due. This explains certain usages which might otherwise seem odd.

It often happens that a fa arranging a marriage speaks for
● [584] a very young girl or even for one not yet born. If the child is handed over before nubility, the marriage is not consummated until after the first menses. We have mentioned above that in such cases the marriage payment involves repeated gifts for years.

583 Another very curious method of paying the bride price
231 is to follow a custom called "the mare's foot." Its essential features are as follows.

A person giving bride price has a mare that he could sell to pay off the obligation, but he prefers to promise one or more of the foals or, as the natives say, one or more of "feet." This method of turning a brood mare to account without selling it is common among the natives of western Sudan.

583 If the payer has promised "a foot," he turns the mare
231 over to the recipient, who will have to feed it and breed it. The latter keeps the foal and returns the mare after the foal is weaned; the risk is his, unless a major catastrophe occurs, and he must prove that such was the case.

If two "feet" are called for, the mare is as it were, jointly owned, each person alternately taking care of the animal and exploiting it for an agreed period. The first foal is jointly held, and after it is weaned, the contracting parties equalize the costs by alternately caring for the mare and the foal. This continues until three foals have been born and weaned. Then the mare and one of the foals goes into one share and the other two foals in another; the share allotted to each party is determined by drawing lots.

When he has completed the payment of "feet," the payer can obtain the woman without having paid any of the bride price since her family has the mare as security.

● 584 It may happen that one or the other of the fiancés dies. In principle, it is well to bear in mind the material standpoint involved: persons are secondary in concluding the affair; the two fa look out for their respective interests while finding a solution to the difficulties that [201] arise during the period of betrothal, often a very long one. The dead fiancé is not uncommonly replaced by one of his brothers (1), and the girl by one of

1. More commonly by one of the sons of the fiancé's community.

her sisters (2); nothing changes in either case. If the fiancé or

2. More commonly by one of the daughters of the fiancée's community.

fiancée cannot be replaced in this way, the disposition of the furu-fen' already received by the girl's family is decided by agreement between the parties. Sometimes the proceeds are divided, with half going to each community; at other times they may be returned to the groom's family, or conversely, they may be left with the bride's family.

584 Though disrupted marriage arrangements are rare, this may happen through a variety of causes and is settled by agreement or, in case of conflict, by arbitrators.

585 Delivery of the bride. Because this act involves a change of status for the parties concerned, it requires the ritual practices of a magical character of which we saw an example in connection with the funeral of a fa. Their purpose is to make sure that change takes place without harm to anyone.

When the payer has fulfilled his obligations and behaved according to custom, the girl must be given to him on the date agreed upon. On that day, the furu-bolo-ma-tigi and the fiancé's friends, accompanied by musicians, appear at the home of the girl's parents to receive and lead away the bride. The parents agree, but the girl has disappeared. The newcomers start at once to look for her, but she cannot be found because her relatives and friends help her to hide. The hunt arouses both sides and leads to brawls; as the excitement reaches its height, the girl is found. Only the intervention of the dugu-tigi himself can put an end to the conflict. He gives his permission to the furu-bolo-ma-tigi to take the girl away and advises her to follow.

Then the furu-bolo-ma-tigi and his companions, acting as an escort, [202] take the girl toward the exit from the village. Just as she is about to leave the enclosure, however, she refuses to go a step farther, and the young men pretend to do violence to her in order to force her to accompany them in spite of her cries. She fights and screams until she is beyond the limits of the village territory. Then she suddenly becomes calm, wraps herself in the large piece of cloth given by her fiancé, and gaily follows her companions, who carry her furu-fen' and have by now joined the group of the furu-bolo-ma-tigi. The troop of young men bring up the rear and make a great racket with drums and trumpets and from time to time give the traditional [583] marriage cry: "kuyo! kuyo! (1)."

1. The simulated abduction must be interpreted as a separation rite.

physical male factor residing in the clitoris. The operation takes place, moreover, during the same period as the circumcision. It is carried out by the potteress, wife of the blacksmith, in full daylight before the assembled kin. During their seclusion the girls wear a white veil which plays the same role as the bonnet of the circumcised. Instead of the sistrum, the girls shake a gourd which contains eight millet seeds and cotton fibers which their fiancés have given them. A goat is sacrificed for the ceremony. The collected blood is given to the fiancé in honor of his ancestors who become those of the girl.

[93] On the last day of the ceremony the girls definitively rid themselves of their wanzo by jumping over a pyre composed of the clothes and scraps of the excised.

e. Marriage

It is only after having been circumcised or excised that young people may marry. The institution of marriage is regulated by a ritual which has often been described, particularly by Amar, Monteil, Tauxier, Aubert . . .

The marriage arrangements are made by the respective fa of the two betrothed, after the young people have been consulted. The request is officially made to the parents by an intermediary, a man of caste or a sénanku. It is accompanied by ritual gifts offered to the fa of the girl. In the Bougouni region the request is accompanied by ten kola nuts, because ten is a complete number that designates good events and future births. (Nine kola nuts are offered to present condolences, four as a sign of greeting. To send three nuts would be insulting, and 19 nuts, marking incompleteness, would be a sign of lack of confidence.) The first kola nuts to be offered are always wrapped in one or two karite leaves, symbol of life and of fecundity. If the ten kola nuts are accepted, it means that the father has opened the way to the marriage. The intermediary then make a second trip the following week, bringing a cock for sacrifice to the ancestors and ten more kola nuts; during a third trip he offers another cock and ten more kola nuts before the entire assembled family of the young girl, witnessing that the girl may meet her fiancé. In the course of the fourth trip, the intermediary leads the girl to the fiancé's family, where she will be confided to the wife of the head of the family who will undertake her education.

584 She returns to her own family every year at the beginning of the rainy season and goes back to her future in-laws at the start of the dry season.

583 584 Every year she takes home 30 kola nuts and three cocks, and the young man's fa begins to pay the bride price which traditionally came to eight oxen and five sheep. The girl returns at the dry season bringing fonio, fruits of the karite, and sumbalé (for making sauces), and other products.

583 585 She is married after the appearance of the first menses, and her husband continues to pay the bride price in the following order: a cow, a bull, a heifer ...

583 584 Throughout the engagement period, the young man must cultivate the field of his future parents-in-law.

583 Among the Bambara who currently practice the exchange of young girls between two families for marriage purposes, the compensation is no longer paid, although gifts and contributions are still given.

584 585 On the day of the marriage the girl is accompanied by an attendant who represents her twin, while the young man also is aided by an attendant, and the two couples symbolize the union of the two couples of [94] primordial twins. Finally, the young girl is carried up to the abode constructed for her by her husband. She is followed by a cortege of seven women, each carrying part of the bride's gifts. The investigation being carried out by Mme. Dieterlen in the Bambara country indicates that the seven women represent the seven [826] seeds that each man possesses in his clavicles; the bride is the fonio seed that is brought to the husband's village, for marriage is considered to be a cultivation.

The marriage of twins requires slightly different rites. When the twins are not of the same sex, the boy must deflower the girl before she marries (there is only one intercourse). If the twins are two boys, the first to marry must let his wife have relations with his twin. If the twins are girls, the husband of the first to be married must also unite with the second.

f. Death and Funerals

761 764 Death dissociates the different elements which make up the person. The purpose of the funeral rites is to gather the spiritual

881 onto the platters of the excised girls. With the last kola nut all leap-
431 ing stops, and the festival ends. Slowly the crowd withdraws and goes home, for it has only too much need of a little rest.

881 On the days following this "coming out of the circumcised"
574 (the name given to this occasion by the Bambara), the youths and maids run around the country dressed up, and go to thank those who were at the da woro, or festival of the sixth day. Boys and girls, in two groups, under the /198/ direction of their old woman guardian, walk along the paths one after another, Indian file. At the head of the column is the massa, or queen; the massa ma Kono, her deputy, comes next, and she is followed by the massa ma Kono ségére, who again is the deputy of the one in front of her. All the others are girls that are healed, and the last, the youngest of all, is called koulé. The boys march in the same order and bear the same titles. This way of thanking people is very Bambara; although they insist on showing themselves so that people will know that they are circumcised, [431] they want especially that alms be given them, and they go to ask a gift and hold out both hands. The Bambara people are a beggar people!

Chapter 10

Bambara Marriage

584 Little Bambara girls are betrothed when they are very young, generally between the ages of four to ten, and girls of twelve, fourteen, and sixteen years who still await a suitor are very unusual. Yet age matters little, for there are three stages in marriage: the proposal, the betrothal, and the wedding, and whoever wants to take a wife, whether he is young, mature, or an old man, married, widower, or unmarried, must obey this law.

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1. The Marriage Proposal (1)

1. The procedures described here apply to the marriage of a young girl. For widows or divorcées who remarry, there are consultations of diviners, sacrifices to the evil fetishes, etc., but the betrothal and wedding ceremonies are performed with a minimum of show.

582 581 The Bambara are not unmoved by the beauty of a woman's form; they can distinguish a well-formed body from a malformed one, a pretty woman from an ugly one, and they find a coppery skin more attractive than one of ebony black. Similarly, a face pitted by smallpox or a bosom covered with scars displeases them, and a man talks to you about his fiancée or his wife, he is quite proud to be able to say: "sien si t'a la, she has a body without blemish," therefore she is beautiful. When it comes to marriage, however, he does not look too closely! He readily keeps silent about his tastes and seldom consults his heart, for a wife to him is primarily a source of pleasure and profit. /200/

581 What he sees in a woman above all is a being of a different sex than he, and if she is industrious, cooks well, and is good at business, he will know how to close his eyes to her defects in order to keep her and allow her to be an important person in his home who must be reckoned with.

584 When a Negro who wants a wife finds an unbetrothed girl, he quickly confides his secret, his fears and hopes, to his close friend, a man of mature age who enjoys some respect in the country (1). The

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1. Some people have thought that the "storytellers /griots/" act as intermediaries in asking the hand of a child. Nothing is more

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erroneous, for the Bambara despises this breed and would never entrust one with such a delicate mission. The Bambara dreads the storyteller in his private festivals. How many times they say as they invite us: "We came ourselves to invite you so that the news may not reach the ears of the storytellers." The to-n-tigi, head of the association of the fla-n-to, plays no important role in the marriage of a to-n-dé, or member. The to-n-déou, members of the association of the fla-n-to, are invited and enjoy themselves at the wedding of a fellow te-n-de, and that is all. Mr. Barbier Louis /sic/ makes a mistake; see page 527, Dec. 16, 1907, of the review La Quinzaine.

584 latter receives four kola nuts wrapped in green leaves and tied again and again so that they will not wither, and, spear in hand and his inseparable goatskin, or foroko, well fastened to his shoulder, he starts on his way, proud to be assigned such a pleasant mission and happy and pleased to be the fourouboloma tigi, guardian of the wedding gifts (2).

2. Fourouboloma, "engagement gift"; tigi, "master."

584 887 576 At the end of his journey, on the public square, he extends a very friendly greeting to the old men who there devote themselves to laziness in the shade of a great tree with the apathy of lizards; he gives them all generously of the snuff that every stranger must offer, and if he has no friend or acquaintance in the village, he chooses from among them a man of good will who will introduce him to the family and smooth the way for him. When this man is found, he goes

584 there without further delay and makes his request, which the man who
887 introduced him repeats word by word and sentence by sentence.

584 The father of the girl ponders a moment, and if the suit pleases him he answers in a word: "A gnéna, that's good." The little package of four kola nuts is then offered him, he summons his daughter and her mother, and the fourouboloma tigi again explains the reason for his /201/ coming. Everything is settled with the following words: "Give my greetings to the one who sent you and all his family, tell him that I am happy he is asking for my daughter. A diara an ye hali (1), it is a great joy for us, but this, you know, needs reflection! I

1. A, "that"; diara, "is happy";
an ye, "for us"; hali, "much."

will speak to my friends soon, and in a few days you will know my decision." The emissary has not been refused and, satisfied with himself and the good prospects of the matter, he leaves to carry to the suitor the words of the girl's father, which should open the door of hope to his heart.

2. The Diviners and Fetishes Accept or Reject the Suitor

584 To marry their daughter and marry her well is a nightmare to
583 every father and mother, and both remain anxious when a suitor presents himself. The Bambara know anguish! A daughter may not be beautiful; often she is even ugly, with a large navel, an umbilical hernia, or blood blister due to the clumsiness of the midwife, but her father lives in her large, white eyes marked with a black spot that is full of life and shining, in her broadly slit mouth and puffy lips; he recognizes his own, and his whole inner being cries to him: "This is your daughter, this is your blood."

Frightful thoughts come to torment him: "If the suitor should have the character of a villain and the brutality of a beast, will he not beat my child mercilessly? Might he have one of those shameful diseases that people hide and do not name, so that my daughter will commit adultery in order to avoid the embarrassment of being

584 sterile? And if he should be one of those sensualists so numerous
593 among us, and, bored after having enjoyed her, should drive her away and reject her?" He trembles and wants to know what the future holds both for him and for her, and goes to consult the diviners.

584 Two and often three diviners are consulted. If they all agree in
593 testifying that the suitor is of good character, that divorce is not to
787 be feared, and that the child will become the mother of healthy, strong, and vigorous children who will perpetuate her people and her blood, he finds joy again. He tells the verdict to both his wife and his daughter, he imparts his decision to the head of the village and the council of elders, and /202/ without any delay, freed as he is from all fear, he notifies the suitor that the doors of his home are open to him.

584 At this announcement the suitor chooses a fat hen from his hen
787 house, takes one or two kola nuts from his store, and again the fourouboloma tigi, the guardian of the wedding gifts, starts on his way, for this time he must find out whether the family boli, and sometimes the shades of its ancestors, are opposed to the proposed union (1).

1. If some occurrence later causes the engagement to be broken, or if there is a marriage followed by divorce, it does not enter his mind that the diviners were mistaken. The whole responsibility falls on the head of an enemy, who through hatred or jealousy has found a way to disrupt everything. It is almost always someone unknown, which is fortunate.

584 The father of the little girl takes down his goatskin, or often the
787 skin of a wild animal, a frightful, dirty foroko, the tabernacle of the
778 family boli; he sprinkles them with the blood of the hen and then spits a piece of chewed kola nut on them. If he does not have family boli -- an unusual situation -- he sacrifices to his ancestors on the doorsill of the entry hut, or b'lon, and on the kàrâ, if he owns one.

584 A kârâ is an earthern bas-relief inside the b'lon, or entry hut, which
787 very crudely depicts a woman and a man and is used as an altar.
778 When the sacrifice is accepted -- that is, if the feathered biped has the fortunate idea of not dying with its wings spread and its breast on the ground, and if the pieces of kola nut, cut in two, which are thrown on the boli or the kârâ, fall with the rounded part on the ground and the pulp on top (2) -- there is an unequivocal "yes" on

2. A procedure which is repeated up to three times in case of failure.

the part of the family, and all hearts rejoice. As to the fourouboloma tigi, he delightedly sucks his piece of kola nut, he savors his piece of the hen, and the scene of the sacrifice is far from his memory. Yet he trembled when, crouched before his boli or the kârâ, altar of his ancestors, the father-in-law cut the throat of the victim and threw down the kola nut, saying in a solemn and cavernous voice: "We have consulted the diviners, and they all agree in praising the suitor; if they are to be believed, he is worthy of our daughter. But you, what do you think of this union? If it is to be /203/ happy, if divorce is not to be feared, if it is to be fertile, accept my sacrifice, I pray you. In that case, grant them wealth, long life, many children, and peace. This hen and the kolas are indeed for the sacrifice, and it is a true sacrifice which the suitor offers you through my mediation."

This manner of accepting or rejecting a suitor is most ingenious! Since everything is referred to the decision of the diviners, the boli, and the shades of ancestors, any dispute on the part of a rejected man is impossible, no quarrel arises between the two families, and when a more fortunate suitor obtains the little girl's hand, he need not fear the hate, rancor, or vengeance of his predecessor for he has nothing to do with the latter's misfortune.

3. The Betrothal

584 583 I have often heard it said that a Bambara marriage is nothing less than a sale and a purchase: the woman goes to the highest bidder. I cannot share such an opinion. The suitor gives a bride price, I know, but this bride price is a present to the fiancée, and its entire value is returned to him. When the fiancée's father receives it, he treats himself to trousers, a cap with three points, a new blouse, a few jugs of d'lo, or millet beer, and many kola nuts; but when the wedding comes, it is the father who provides his child with loincloths, gourds, pottery, in fact her whole trousseau, and however slight his vanity -- and what Bambara is not vain! -- he will spend the bride price and even more.

When the suitor has been able to gather two to three kilograms of salt, a few bits of cloth for the little girl and her mother, and a portion of the bride price (1), which varies between 25 and 30 francs,

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1. The bride price is set at ba mougan ni tan, about 24, 000 cowrie shells. Each ba equals 10 kémé. The kémé is worth 80 cowrie shells, the ba 800 cowrie shells. In ordinary times a 5-franc piece is exchanged for ba dourou ni kémé dourou, or 4, 400 cowrie shells. The value of the cowries is subject to rise and fall, so that the 5-franc piece is sometimes worth 4, 400 cowrie shells; at other times the cowries drop and the 5-franc piece is worth ba woro ni kémé dourou, or 6 ba and 5 kémé, or ba wolonoula, 7 ba.

he pays his respects to the family through his intermediary, the fouroubolomo tigi, or guardian of the wedding gifts. The latter goes to the father-in-law, escorted /204/ by a few young girls who carry the fouroufen, or bride price, the gifts of cloth and salt, and a few jugs

583 of d'lo, or millet beer. The head of the village and his council,
584 friends, and the to-n-déou, or members of the association of the fla-n-to (1), go at once to pay their respects to the happy father and

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1. The association of the fla-n-to, with a to-n-tigi at its head, is made up of several groups of to-n-déou, or members of the association. Every group corresponds to a circumcision. /sic/ When many are circumcised at the same time, they form a group, but if there are only one, two, or three, they join the group of those circumcised at the preceding occasion. The to-n-dé invites to his betrothal and his wedding the members of his group, who were circumcised with him, and the members of the older groups. As to the younger groups, he does not invite them. The women also form an association of fla-n-to similar to that of the men but separate from it. The woman who is at the head of the association, usually the oldest in the village, is called to-n-tigi, or massa fama, queen, and the to-n-dé mouso (the to-n-dé women) call her m'ba, mother. They are summoned only to the wedding.

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584 to tell the girl that her betrothal is being celebrated and cannot henceforth be broken without a grave and important reason. Soon the b'lon of /sic/ the entry hut and the inner court are full of crouching men who drink d'lo, or millet beer, and soon ramble in their talk. And

583 the fiancée has time to reflect and to open her heart to love, for her
584 wedding will not take place until one, two, or often three years after excision; once this has been performed she will be qualified to be a mother.

584 From the time of the engagement the two families draw together,
594 establish friendly relations, and visit each other. After the girl has grown up, during the year or two that elapse between the excision and the wedding, she spends two weeks to a month each year with her parents-in-law. One might say that in Bani country, this is the general custom (2). When the young men sent to bring her arrives,

> 2. In the environs of Ségou this custom is less comon. Often the two families come to an agreement, and on the appointed day the fiancée goes to the home of her fiancé, accompanied by a young man appointed by the council of elders. After the last festival of the circumcision (baloko déou don bo, "the coming out of the circumcised"), some, even many villages hold a festival for the fiancée. She goes to the home of her fiancé all loaded with beads and necklaces and escorted by all the young girls of the village. The fiancé bears all the cost of this festival, called mousodjira, "to show the wife." All the youths of the village and of neighboring villages give 80 to 160 cowrie shells to help the fiancé cover the expenses.

[43]

she /205/ hides in the hut of friends, and the little band runs right and left looking for her. They soon find her, members of her family--

584 her mother, step-mothers, and sisters -- join them, and the little
574 procession goes to the religious head, the gnéna-sonnaba, priest of the dasiri, genie protector of the village, who gives some advice to the child and sets the day of her return. On leaving the village, the girl stops and refuses to go on; the youths take hold of her and carry her in their arms, and she abandons herself to cries and shouts that must not cease before she reaches the edge of the fields that surround the village.

584 Although the bride price is set, it is more difficult to determine
431 the value of the fiancé's presents of millet, hens, salt, kola, and d'lo, or millet beer. The size of these presents, given gratuitously over four, five, or six years and often more, depends largely on the fortune of each man and the prestige of the fiancée's family. At harvest time he supplies one or two baskets of millet /each/ weighing 20 to 40 kilograms; at the great annual sacrifice offered to the family boli he provides a hen, salt, kola nuts, and dégé, or millet flour mixed with honey water. From time to time he gives his prospective father-in-law some well-filled jugs of d'lo containing at least 20 to 30 liters /each/, and if there is a festival at his home, he is careful not to forget the latter. He shows his generosity at the festival on the occasion of his fiancée's excision (1); at the da woro, or festival of

1. A Bambara man is not present at the festival which takes place at the excision of his fiancée.

the sixth day, he shows himself to be generous, and the guardian of the wedding gifts takes her the required present, a loincloth in black stripes on a yellow background, four to five pounds /the French livre equals one half a kilogram, a little more than a pound avoirdupois/ of butter, two to three kilograms of salt, 20 to 30 liters of d'lo, or millet beer, an equal amount of dégé, or flour mixed with honey water, and finally some decorative ornaments -- a bead necklace, a piece of amber, a bracelet. These last gifts are in no way required; they are given purely out of amiable courtesy.

584 One little fact without importance, remains to be noted. From
604 the time of the engagement, the fiancée may not eat in the presence

584 606 of her father-in-law nor linger with him in endless conversations, especially when no witnesses are present, and the fiancé is subject to the same rules with regard to his mother-in-law. /206/

583 584 In a word, they may no longer even look at each other! If the fiancé dies before the wedding, it is in good taste for the girl to become the fiancée of a younger brother, but if there is no brother she regains her liberty and keeps her bride price. If the fiancée dies, the family usually keeps the bride price they have received; custom permits the fiancé to demand the return of half the bride price but, in the eyes of everyone, to do so would indicate a lack of tact and delicacy. But if for one reason or another the engagement is broken, the bride price and small presents are returned to the fiancé in their entirety.

4. The Wedding of a Young Bambara Girl

584 585 The fiancé asks for the girl (1). -- The fourou fen (the bride

1. It happens sometimes that the family cannot refuse the suitor's request for the girl, although she does not have all her trousseau. In that case the wedding festival is put off, but she is led to her husband, and a little private celebration takes place on that day. When she has her trousseau she goes back to her family, and the big festival is held.

price and small presents) have been paid, the fiancée is a grown young lady who has long been excised, and only rags remain of the beautiful yellow loincloth with black stripes which was received at the da woro, or festival that follows the sixth day after the circumcision. A kouara -- she has reached her full development and henceforth can only decline in grace and beauty, and her fiancé desires her. The

fourouboloma tigi, or guardian of the wedding gifts, puts on his festive clothes and takes 5 kémé, or 400 cowrie shells, to the father-in-law. The gesture is understood by everyone and means: "When will the wedding be?" A Negro has only one love: his interests; only one affect of affection: himself. In his egotism he thinks only of himself and of receiving cowrie shells; his heart is not unduly stirred. He thinks of his fields, his business, and his stomach. The members of the family, from the oldest to the youngest, have only these words on their lips: "How she handles the hoe! What a good tongue for praising merchandise and selling it; how well she cooks!" And it all stops there, for no one pays heed to her feelings. In vain will she cry that she detests her fiancé, that she does not love him at all, never could love him, and that she prefers another; in vain will she flee the /207/ paternal roof and take refuge with a sympathetic relative; she must obey! Her father and mother have received the oracle of the diviners; in accepting the sacrifice, the family boli have accepted the suitor, and they /the family/ cannot oppose the orders of their gods or, if one prefers the other term, their family fetishes (1).

1. Custom decrees that the girl spend one night with her fiancé 10 or 15 days before the wedding. Some families dispense with this practice. The whole procedure is carried out in privacy: the girl arrives at night, brought by a member of her family, and withdraws at dawn. The two following expressions denote this procedure: Ou tara di à tjéma ("they have gone to give her to her husband").

Moreover, I must admit that there are very few Bambara women who openly show their antipathy. They cannot resist paternal authority and freely give themselves to the man to whom they have been betrothed; "an ka lada do, it is our custom," they say, and the idea does not occur to them that there could be another.